

AUGUSTA HISTORICAL BULLETIN



Published by the
AUGUSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 10

Spring 1974

Number 1

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Founded 1964

Post Office Box 686

Staunton, Virginia 24401



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AUGUSTA COUNTY AND "THE REAL AMERICAN REVOLUTION"

William H. B. Thomas
and
Howard McKnight Wilson*

In the ten fateful years between the Stamp Act crisis in 1765 and the opening shots at Lexington and Concord in 1775, Virginia and the other American colonies moved closer to a final breach with England. It was the decade of what John Adams, himself an observer and participant during those dramatic years, called "the real American Revolution" in the minds and hearts of the people which led to independence.¹ This was indeed very real, and Americans had much to say about it at the time.

Following the first Continental Congress in the fall of 1774, inhabitants of counties and towns throughout the colonies met to discuss the resolutions and mandates of that body and to express their own sentiments. Many declared their hearty agreement and avowed their determined support; some dissented. Of those groups which voiced agreement and support, one comprised the people of Augusta County.

In February 1775 a meeting of freeholders was held at Staunton, county seat of Augusta, for the purpose of electing delegates to the Virginia Convention to be held the following month. (It was at this convention at St. John's Church in Richmond that Patrick Henry, urging immediate preparations for defense of the colony, climaxed his impassioned plea with words that stunned his listeners and have thrilled Americans ever since: "I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death.") On February 22 Thomas Lewis and Captain Samuel McDowell were chosen as delegates to the convention and their instructions were drawn up by a committee composed of Reverend Alexander Balmaine, Sampson Mathews, Captain Alexander McClanahan, Michael Bowyer, William Lewis, and Captain George Mathews.²

Of those Augusta leaders, Thomas Lewis was the brother of Colonel Andrew Lewis, commander at the victorious battle of

Point Pleasant the previous fall, and a man of cultivated taste and much in the public service. Captain Samuel McDowell, a company commander at Point Pleasant, was then a member of the House of Burgesses from Augusta. Reverend Alexander Balmaine, ardent in the cause of liberty, was rector of Augusta Parish; Sampson Mathews, a leading Staunton merchant and a justice of the County Court; Alexander McClanahan, also a justice and one of Colonel Charles Lewis's captains at Point Pleasant; Michael Bowyer, one of several brothers prominent in the Revolutionary cause; William Lewis, brother of Thomas and Colonel Andrew Lewis, a well-educated physician with considerable influence in the county; and George Mathews, associated in business with his brother Sampson, another Augusta captain at Point Pleasant, and a member of the last session of the House of Burgesses.

The committee's instructions to Thomas Lewis and Captain Samuel McDowell were as follows:

To Mr. THOMAS LEWIS and Capt. SAMUEL M'DOWELL:

The Committee of Augusta County, pursuant to the trust reposed in them by the Freeholders of the same, have chosen you to represent them in a Colony Convention; proposed to be held in Richmond, on the 20th of March, instant. They desire that you may consider the people of Augusta County as impressed with just sentiments of loyalty and allegiance to his Majesty King George, whose title to the Imperial Crown of Great Britain rests on no other foundation than the liberty, and whose glory is inseparable from the happiness of all his subjects. We have also a respect for the parent state, which respect is founded on religion, on law, and the genuine principles of the Constitution. On these principles do we earnestly desire to see harmony and a good understanding restored between Great Britain and America. Many of us and our forefathers left their native land, and explored this once savage wilderness, to enjoy the free exercise of the rights of conscience and of human nature. These rights we are fully resolved, with our lives and fortunes, inviolably to preserve; nor will we surrender such inestimable blessings, the purchase of toil and danger, to any Ministry, to any Parliament, or any body of men upon earth, by whom we are not represented, and in whose decisions, therefore, we have no voice.

We desire you to tender, in the most respectful terms, our grateful acknowledgments to the late worthy Delegates of this Colony, for their wise, spirited, and patriotick exertions in the General Congress, and to assure them that we will uniformly and religiously adhere to their Resolutions, prudently and generously formed for their country's good.

Fully convinced that the safety and happiness of America depend, next to the blessing of Almighty God, on the unanimity and wisdom of her Councils, we doubt not you will, on your parts, comply with the recommendation of the late Continental Congress, appointing Dele-

*Mr. Thomas and Dr. Wilson are engaged in the research and writing of the Society's Bicentennial Project history.

gates from this Colony to meet in Philadelphia on the 10th of May next, unless American Grievances be redressed before that time; and as we are determined to maintain unimpaired that liberty which is the gift of Heaven to the subjects of Britain's Empire, we will most cordially join our countrymen in such measures as may be deemed wise and necessary to secure and perpetuate the ancient, just, and legal rights of this Colony and all British America.

As the state of this Colony greatly demands that Manufactures should be encouraged by every possible means, we desire you to use your endeavours that Bounties may be proposed by the Convention for the making of Salt, Steel, Wool Cards, Paper, and Gunpowder; and that, in the mean time, a supply of Ammunition be provided for the Militia of this Colony. We entirely agree in opinion with the gentlemen of Fairfax County, that a well regulated Militia is the natural strength and stable security of a free Government, and therefore wish it might be recommended by the Convention to the officers and men of each County in Virginia, to make themselves masters of the military exercise, published by order of his Majesty, in the year 1764.

The instructions concluded with, as Dr. Wilson has aptly expressed it, "a pointed emphasis upon faith":

Placing our ultimate trust on the Supreme Disposer of every event, without whose gracious interposition the wisest schemes may fail of success, we desire you to move the Convention that some day, which may appear to them most convenient, be set apart for imploring the blessing of Almighty God, on such plans as human wisdom and integrity may think necessary to adopt, for preserving America happy, virtuous, and free.³

On April 14, 1775 only days before the battles of Lexington and Concord, the *Virginia Gazette* carried the letter of Thomas Lewis and Captain Samuel McDowell, written according to their instructions from the committee, to the Virginia delegates to the first Continental Congress. With it was printed the response of Peyton Randolph and his colleagues. Lewis and McDowell conveyed the feelings of Augusta as follows:

To the Honourable PEYTON RANDOLPH, Esquire, President, RICHARD HENRY LEE, GEORGE WASHINGTON, PATRICK HENRY, RICHARD BLAND, BENJAMIN HARRISON, and EDMUND PENDLETON, Esquires, Delegates from this Colony to the General Congress.

GENTLEMEN: We have it in command, from the Freeholders of Augusta County, by their Committee, held the 22d of February, to present you with their grateful acknowledgments of thanks, for the prudent, virtuous, and noble exertions of the faculties with which Heaven has endowed you in the cause of liberty, and of every thing that men ought to hold sacred, at the late General Congress; a conduct so nobly interesting, that it must command that tribute of applause,

not only from this, but succeeding ages. May that sacred flame that has illuminated your minds, and influenced your conduct, in projecting and concurring in so many salutary determinations for the preservation of American Liberty, ever continue to direct your conduct, to the latest period of your lives. May the bright example be fairly transcribed on the hearts, and reduced into practice by every Virginian, by every American. May our hearts be open to receive, and our arms strong to defend, that liberty and freedom, the gift of Heaven, now banishing from its last retreat in Europe. Here let it be hospitably entertained in every breast; here let it take deep root, and flourish in everlasting bloom; that, under its benign influence, the virtuously free may enjoy secure repose, and stand forth the scourge and terror of tyranny and tyrants of every order and denomination, till time shall be no more. Be pleased, gentlemen, to accept of their grateful sense of your important services, and of their ardent prayers for the best interest of this once happy country; and vouchsafe, gentlemen, to accept of the same from your most humble servants,

THOMAS LEWIS, } Delegates.⁴
SAMUEL M'DOWELL, }

The Virginia delegates—Randolph, Richard Henry Lee, George Washington, Patrick Henry, Richard Bland, Benjamin Harrison, and Edmund Pendleton—replied in generous fashion:

To THOMAS LEWIS and SAMUEL M'DOWELL, Esquires.

GENTLEMEN: Be pleased to transmit to the respectable Freeholders of the County of Augusta our sincere thanks for their affectionate Address, approving our conduct in the late Continental Congress. It gives us the greatest pleasure to find that our honest endeavours to serve our country on this arduous and important occasion, has met their approbation, a reward fully adequate to our warmest wishes; and the assurances from the brave and spirited people of Augusta, that their hearts and hands shall be devoted to the support of the measures adopted, or hereafter to be taken, by the Congress, for the preservation of American Liberty, give us the highest satisfaction, and must afford pleasure to every friend to the just rights of mankind.

We cannot conclude without acknowledgments to you, gentlemen, for the polite manner in which you have communicated to us the sentiments of your worthy constituents; and are their and your obedient humble servants,

PEYTON RANDOLPH, RICHARD BLAND,
RICHARD HENRY LEE, BENJAMIN HARRISON,
GEORGE WASHINGTON, EDMUND PENDLETON.⁵
PATRICK HENRY,

At the end of a decade of crisis—"the real American Revolution"—the people of Augusta County expressed their sentiments forthrightly and without reservation and with faith in the God of Hosts.

NOTES

1. John Adams to Hezekiah Niles, 1818, as quoted in Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 160.
2. Peter Force, ed., *American Archives* . . . (Washington, D. C., 1837-1853), 4th series, I, 1253-1254.
3. *Ibid.*, 1254-1255.
4. *Ibid.*, 1255.
5. *Ibid.*

MORE ABOUT DR. KING AND AUGUSTA PARISH

Communicated by Fitzhugh Elder, Jr.

In "Staunton A Generation Ago," a chapter from Joseph A. Waddell's *Home Scenes and Family Sketches* printed in the fall 1973 number of the BULLETIN, mention is made of Dr. William King's services to Augusta Parish. The following tells more about this and is taken from Bishop William Meade's *Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia* (Philadelphia, 2 vols., 1861), 322. The Society is indebted to Fitzhugh Elder, Jr., for communicating this excerpt.

Years rolled on, in which a long interval occurred in the rectorship of the parish. At length the few friends who had been left from the desolations of the Revolution, and from the withering odium which had fallen on the Church because of its connection with the British Crown, began to lift up their heads and to look round with a cautious and timid eye for some one to minister to them in holy things. At length a good old man, moving in the humbler spheres of life, remarkable for nothing but his consistent and inoffensive piety, presented himself as willing to serve them in the capacity of God's minister. He had long been a member of the Methodist Church, and had there imbibed that spirit of feeling and ardent religion which seemed so peculiarly to characterize that body of Christians in those dreary days of our Church. Notwithstanding Mr. King's (for that was his name) roughness of manners, his meagre education, his simplicity of intellect, and his humble profession as a steam-doctor, he was taken in hand by a few friends of the Church, and pushed forward in his laudable efforts. He was sent off, with letters of commendation from Judge Archibald Stuart and the Hon. John H. Peyton, to Bishop Madison, who ordained him Deacon and sent him back to read the services and sermons to the desolate flock in Staunton. His ministry began in the year 1811 and closed with his death in 1819. That was a long and cheerless day for the Church here. No evidence can be found that she then had a single communicant besides the simple-hearted old Deacon to kneel at her altar. So unpopular was her cause that none but those whose principles were as true and unbending as steel would venture openly to avow themselves her friends. An eyewitness of the scene told me that on the occasion of the first service after Mr. King's return from Williamsburg, the small congregation, the feeble and disjointed response, the dampening dreariness of the church, with its old high-back pews, and the long, singsong, drawling tones in which the new deacon attempted to read the service and one of Blair's Sermons, presented a solemn ludicrousness he never before or since witnessed. The congregation, numbering not a dozen, left the church dispirited and ashamed, almost resolved never to repeat the experiment. Mr. King died here, esteemed by all who knew him for his humble zeal and simple-hearted piety.

A CURSORY LOOK AT THE PRONUNCIATION OF STAUNTON

Carroll Lisle

Visitors and newcomers to Staunton often are perplexed by the pronunciation of the city's name, and even the native born are hard pressed to explain why it is pronounced as *Stanton*. Seeing the *u* in the name, the uninitiated tend to pronounce the diphthong *au* as in *August*, hence *Stawnton*. But the local pronunciation has a short *a* and the *u* is forgotten.

More than two centuries ago when Staunton was named, the pronunciation possibly was not as it is now, but it quite likely was not *Stawnton* either. It may have had a broad *a* sound originally so that it would sound like *Stahnnton*. This sound the British give to their Canterbury, which like Staunton once was spelled Caunterbury. Other words that at one time were spelled with *au* but have since lost the second vowel are *answer*, *chant*, *chance*, and *stanch*. All of these the British pronounce with the *a* of *father*, but the Americans tend to flatten the vowel.

In nineteenth-century America when pronunciation was part of the school curriculum, rules were taught. There was a rule governing words like *Staunton*. When *au* was followed by *n* and another consonant, the sound of the *au* was changed from *aw* to *a* as in *father*.¹ Even today some Americans adhere to this rule in pronouncing words such as *aunt* and *laundry*, but most do not.

This apparent disregard for the rule is not willful contrariness on the speakers' parts, but simply that the rule is contrary to centuries-engrained speech tradition. Dialect is a strong force. A case in point is the word *ewe*. The standard English pronunciation of the word is *yew*, yet the majority of farmers up and down the Shenandoah Valley, in Maryland and Pennsylvania's Cumberland Valley, and in the adjacent highlands call a female sheep a *yo*. The word had been pronounced *yo* for centuries before the ancestors of these people filtered into these regions from northern England and the lowlands of Scotland.²

At any rate, the shift from *a* as in *father* to *a* as in *hat* is not unique to America. It is a process that also occurred centuries ago. Some linguists believe that the short *a*, which was common in Old English (ca. 700-1100), developed into a broad *a* and then, some time later, began to be pronounced as a flat *a* again.³

The verb *drank* in Modern English contains a short *a*, but in Middle English (ca. 1100-1500) the *a* was as in *father*.⁴

Though Staunton may have been pronounced *Stahnnton* originally, it seems likely that it was *Stanton* all along. In our own time it is extremely difficult to tell how words were pronounced two centuries back. We have to look to evidence in rhyme, surviving dialectal forms, and to contemporary discourses on pronunciation. In 1721 Dr. Isaac Watts published *The Art of Reading and Writing English*, which is of interest today in that it indicates prevailing pronunciations of the early eighteenth century in Britain. Presumably, many of these were the same in America. In his table of "Words Written Very Different From Their Pronunciation," the word *jaundise* appears.⁵ Its pronunciation was indicated as *janders*. We cannot know, in the absence of diacritical marks, what value the *a* had, but since the list included another *au* word, *vault* pronounced *vawt*, we do know that the *au* of our modern *jaundice* was not pronounced with the *aw* sound then. It was either as the *a* in *father* or the *a* in *hat*.

The short *a* sound prevails in the pronunciation of the masculine name *Chauncey* which rhymes with *Clancy*. *Saucy* has come to be spelled *sassy*; the newer spelling corresponds more nearly to the pronunciation than *saucy* does. The name of Thomas Staunton (1605-1677) in the public records and documents of the seventeenth century was as often spelled *Stanton*. This indicates the pronunciation.

Pronunciation dictionaries did not exist until the eighteenth century. John Walker in his *Pronouncing Dictionary* of 1791 pronounced *daunt*, *gaunt*, *paunch*, *taunt*, and *saunter* all with a short *a* as in *hat*. Thomas Sheridan, father of the playwright and teacher of elocution, published *A Complete Dictionary of the English Language* in 1780, which indicated that the pronunciation of *aun* was *awn*. Yet both he and Walker pronounced *haunt* as if it were spelled *hant*.⁶ Possibly Sheridan's pronunciation was influenced by his stay in Dublin.

Although place names do not change pronunciation as readily as do other words, it is possible that in the next century Staunton will be pronounced *Stawnton*. "Spelling pronunciations" are common. Few people realize that the *n* in *kiln*, for example, is preferably silent, that *conduit* has two syllables only and the last rhymes with *circuit*, hence *condit*, and that the *al* in *falcon* is like the *al* in *Baltimore* or *Albany* and not as in *balance*. (Originally, the word *falcon* never had an *l* at all.) The seven-

teenth-century poet Alexander Pope rhymed *join* with *line* and even into the early part of our own century some people pronounced *boil* and *roil* in the old way: *bile* and *rile*. Though we still say *sergeant* as if the *er* were *ar*, we do not say—as George Washington or Herman Melville would have said—*marchant sarvice*. Pronunciation, then, *is* influenced by spelling, and very often the written form eventually determines the pronunciation.

These comments are meant to be suggestive rather than definitive. The writer hopes that readers will contribute their own observations, refuting or amplifying what is written here.

NOTES

1. William Henry P. Phyfe, *Seven Thousand Words Often Mispronounced* (New York, 1893), 165.
2. This writer has heard the *yo* pronunciation in Australia also, where it was taken probably by the immigrants from Scotland and northern England.
3. Margaret M. Bryant, *Modern English and Its Heritage* (New York, 1948), 144.
4. *Ibid.*, 162.
5. George H. McKnight, *The Evolution of the English Language from Chaucer to the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1968, reprinted from the 1928 ed.), 346.
6. *Ibid.*, 443ff.

EARLY CIVIL WAR DAYS IN WAYNESBORO

A Manuscript From The Papers Of
Elliott Guthrie Fishburne, C.S.A.,
With Appended Notes By Joseph B. Yount III

The following manuscript, which comparison shows to be almost certainly in the handwriting of Elliott Guthrie Fishburne (1842-1906), was found in 1972 among his papers and books now in the possession of his grandson and namesake, Mr. Elliott Guthrie Fishburne of Waynesboro, Virginia, who has made it available to the Augusta County Historical Society for publication. It is a firsthand account of the formation and early activities of Company E, 1st Virginia Cavalry, the so-called "Valley Rangers," formed under the captaincy of William Patrick from the young men of Waynesboro and eastern Augusta County in the early days of the Civil War. The last page or pages of the manuscript are missing, but the surviving portion of the stirring narrative is presented here in its entirety, followed by biographical notes on Mr. Fishburne, Captain (later Major) Patrick, and Reverend William T. Richardson, all of whom figure in the text.

The manuscript reads as follows:*

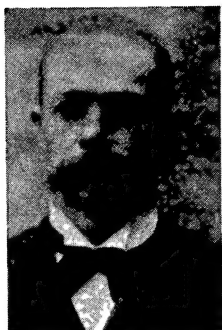
REMINISCENCES

Written by request for a young lady who read it at a meeting of the "Daughters of the Confederacy" — in Waynesboro, Va. March 1897.

Now, it is the "Daughters of the Confederacy," then it was the Mothers, sisters and sweethearts of the South who gathered to see their sons, brothers, and lovers off to the war.

What a thrilling time it was in that Spring of 1861 "when a Nation was born" and a most glorious chapter in human bearing and daring was written. When the Southern Confederacy, that inspiration of Cavaliers and Righteousness, that inspirer of heroes, who pricked their names on the pages of history with sword and bayonet point, of Poets who "wreathed around with glory" the Southern Cross, of Matrons and Maidens who gave more than life to its defence. Then began the assembling of that Southern manhood and boyhood who were to go "Sounding down the ages" as the Confederate Army. Among the first to enroll themselves under its banner were "The

* A minimum amount of editing has been done in connection with the text.



Elliott Guthrie Fishburne, C.S.A.
From the *Confederate Veteran*
(May 1906)

Valley Rangers"—a volunteer cavalry company—composed of the very best of the young men living along the Eastern side of Augusta County, who under their first Captain—the brave Patrick—who later as Major of the 17th Battalion was to die gloriously on the plains of Second Manassas) met in historic Waynesboro to go to the front. 'Twas then the comedy parts in the great opening drama commenced. How exercised we were about our uniforms, how we had to send off for the material, and get just the right shade of color—and the exact buttons, braid, etc! How we watched the making of them and how impatient we got—and at length—when finished, and donned, how we did strut and how gorgeous we were with our wide yellow (the cavalry color) striped trousers and braided coats and bright, brass buttons (a gross of them more or less) and our hats, great, widebrimmed slouches, with plume and gilt cord and tassel, and what a sight was the little fellow in his over large clothes. My Eye! but it was comic; and our pictures would grace the Sunday newspaper of today. Then, at last, when everything was ready—our horses, the finest and best in the county, groomed to perfection, with plaited manes and tails, new saddles with bright red blankets and girths, our big, old fashioned saddlepockets stuffed to bulging with every useful article—and then the baggage wagon to follow with our trunks, bedding, etc., etc., enough for an army in later days. And the joke of it all was that not one in ten had a weapon of any kind, unless it was a toy pistol or so, and to think of such a going to war!

But then, the guns we would (and did) get later—from the enemy! How vividly the scene comes back of our last mustering. How we formed in line on Main Street—and as we mounted our horses for the last time—of the motherly caress and cautions—the fathers' advice—the sisters' proud smile and the admiring looks of the younger

brothers and the servants—and then, the sly embrace of the sweetheart behind the parlor door, when we rushed in to say good by for the twentieth time! Last came the presentation of our flag and farewell address from our good and true old Parson Richardson. Then from our Captain came "Attention Company!" "By twos March!" "Head of Column right!" And away we marched for Harper's Ferry to fight Yankees and without a gun. (Pure comedy that—with no chance for a tragedy). What an enjoyable march it was. To us boys, it was as when school closed—and we reveled in the sense of freedom and dreamed of the great and daring deeds we would perform. The march down the Valley in that lovely April was enjoyed ever so much. How we laughed and chatted by the way and now and then tried the speed and mettle of our horses and how we were cheered and admired by the girls all along the route. And then the great event, our arrival at Harper's Ferry, where was forming that grand army that later—as the Army of Northern Virginia—was for the coming four years to perform the deeds of heroism that make it the honor it now is to be a Daughter of "the Confederacy."

Camp life was a revelation and delight to the boys who had been so strictly raised at home and we threw ourselves into and enjoyed it to the full. How we smoked, played cards, frolicked, tussled and let ourselves out in gay abandon! O! but it was jolly.

Pretty soon our camp at the Ferry was broken up and the war began in earnest. Then our Company, now known as Co. E, 1st Virginia Cavalry, made the first fight in the valley by a skirmish with a lot of Yankees across the Potomac at Williamsport—and in a few days we had our first man shot (Gam Dalhouse) and then we fought along with the West Augusta Guards of Staunton and the Rockbridge Artillery and the other troops under Jackson (the building Stonewall brigade) at "Falling Waters" and under J. E. B. Stuart our Major and then and afterwards our Great Cavalry General. We captured the very first company of Yankees—and had one of our company (Zach Johnson) wounded. Both Johnson and Dalhouse died in a few months—partly from their wounds.

It was in this fight at Falling Waters that Major D. W. Drake and Capt. John Opie—then privates in the West Augusta Guards—being a little in advance of our line of battle and so intent on firing at the Yankees—did not notice the withdrawal of their command—but continued shooting—and thus, those two brave boys held in check the Yankee General Patterson's army—for a while, and then fell back in good order and without a scratch. Both of these boys afterwards performed many deeds of bravery but the holding in check of an Army was great. But it was not all tragedy. As when the fight was over, then came the camp with its pleasure of good comradeship and fun—and there we got the variety—tragedy and comedy that was the spice of our soldier life.

It was not often we saw our sweethearts or any other fellow's sweetheart; but just now and then we would camp near some nice girls and would have the time and cheek to make their acquaintance. So it happened to us one time down down in Culpeper County. We

camped for a month near the homes of several charming girls and fortunately "one of ours" (Drake) knew them. So our mess "had the call" on that house and we went in for all the fun and good eatings possible. We had music, and dinners and suppers whenever we could get away from Camp. And just then we got a "box from home" and concluded to set up a big dinner to our girl friends as a return for the many we "had on them," so with much care and concern we fixed up a table with some old plank and covered it with an oil cloth for a table cloth and had stumps, etc. for seats. Now! every mess had in it one who was supposed to be a boss cook. Ours was James E. Irvine the best of comrades and soldiers. So to "old Jim" was entrusted the making of the coffee and the spread generally, whilst we courting boys rode gaily away to fetch our girls on behind us into camp. And how delightful was that ride! how we would spur our horses, making them cut up, so the girl on behind would cling to us ever so clingingly—as it is their nature. O! My! but the fun of that ride! And our entry into camp! My! but what an event! How the boys would pass by our mess at a distance, just to get a glance at the girls and others would from behind trees take long and wistful looks at the strange beings. And that dinner! What a grand success it was. O! those boxes from home! What delights they were both in giving and receiving! How carefully were their contents selected. The best of everything at home was for the soldier boys. And then, how the boys enjoyed them; and how unselfish they were, calling in all their friends to the feast. At last dinner was announced. First came the ham. It was the largest, oldest and best in the smokehouse—boiled and then roasted to a turn at home—with its spots of black pepper, the piece irresistible. Then the sausage so nicely fried by Jim, with its brown gravy, the cold tongue, the jar of pickle, the nice butter, the homemade cheese, . . .

Here ends the surviving manuscript. The lost pages have not been located.

ELLIOTT GUTHRIE FISHBURNE

The best biography of Elliott Guthrie Fishburne was a memorable tribute written by G. J. Pratt of Walnut Grove, Waynesboro, Virginia, and published in the *Confederate Veteran*, vol. 14, no. 5, Nashville, Tennessee, May 1906. It is quoted below in its entirety. The accompanying photograph of Mr. Fishburne is from the same source.

Sunday morning, February 25, 1906, after a brief illness, in the sixty-fourth year of his age, Elliott G. Fishburne answered the roll call and his gallant spirit mingled with loved comrades who have crossed over the river and are resting under the shade of the trees.

When Virginia resumed her rightful sovereignty and called her sons to arms, this youth was among the first to respond, and passed from the tender associations and gentle influences of a Christian home

into the stern activities of war as a member of Capt. William Patrick's company of cavalry. It was composed for the most part of young men reared in the neighborhood of Waynesboro, Va. This company (afterwards E of the 1st Virginia Cavalry) had no superior in that distinguished regiment, first commanded by Jeb Stuart and afterwards by Fitz Lee. At the reorganization Capt. Patrick was promoted to the rank of major and assigned to the command of the 17th Virginia Battalion. He fell on the 29th of August, 1862, but was immortalized by both Jackson and Stuart in their official tribute to his intrepid courage and invaluable services.

For distinguished service Elliott G. Fishburne was promoted to first corporal and then to third sergeant, and twice, at Raccoon Ford and the Wilderness, consecrated with his blood the soil of his loved Virginia. The following is the testimony of M. D. Leonard, a comrade: "We all remember 'Fish' as one who rode at the head of the company. In an engagement his coolness was conspicuous. He knew no fear, as was proven by his conduct on many fields; but especially on the night after the Second Manassas, when with two comrades, Henry Kennedy and W. S. McCauseland, he captured forty-two well-armed soldiers belonging to a New York cavalry regiment, with the captain at its head, and turned them over as prisoners to the 12th Virginia Cavalry, commanded by Col. A. W. Harrison." Kennedy was killed on this occasion. McCauseland now resides in Texas.

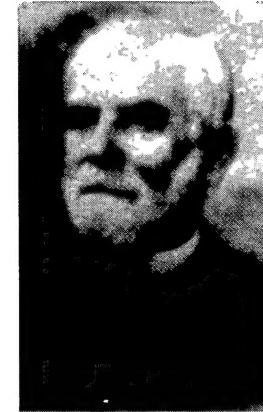
"Ellie" Fishburne's business life after the war was spent in the community where he was born, possessing the love and esteem of those who were his companions in youth. Modesty was his charm, and yet he possessed all the elements of heroic character. His soldier life was a model, and loving memories abide with the comrades who touched elbows with him during those years of trial and sacrifice. His fidelity to all demands of comradeship was abundantly illustrated. He took a lively interest in all Confederate associations. He was ex-President of the Augusta Memorial Association and a member of the Stonewall Jackson Camp, C. V., of Staunton, Va., and his love for cause and comrades seemed to grow stronger with the years. "We shall meet, but we shall miss him." This community mourns a citizen of character and usefulness. He was laid to rest with military honors. Delegations from the Camp, survivors of Company E, the large attendance of comrades, neighbors, and friends, and the exquisite and lavish floral contribution testified to the affection for his memory. He is survived by a devoted wife, a son, and a daughter.

MAJOR WILLIAM PATRICK

William Patrick was born December 6, 1822 at Locust Isle, the home of the Patricks from 1747 to 1930, located along South River north of Waynesboro and due east of and adjacent to the new Hugh K. Cassell Elementary School. He was wounded at the second battle of Manassas, while serving as Major of the



Major William Patrick, C.S.A.
Courtesy, Miss Marion D. Arbuckle



Reverend William T. Richardson, D.D.
From *Centennial History of the
First Presbyterian Church of
Waynesboro, Virginia* (1946)

17th Battalion of Virginia Cavalry, and died September 2, 1862, three days later.

Major Patrick's grave in the family cemetery at Locust Isle is marked by a handsome obelisk which describes him as "a good citizen, brave soldier and true patriot. A tender father, loving husband, and fast friend." Also engraved on the monument are eulogies written of him by the great Confederate generals, J. E. B. Stuart and Stonewall Jackson. General Stuart said of Patrick: "He lived long enough to witness the triumph of our arms and expired in the arms of victory. The sacrifice was noble but the loss to us was irreparable." Stonewall Jackson wrote of him: "He fell in the attack while setting an example of gallantry to his men, well worthy of imitation."

Major William Patrick's wife was Hettie Garuthers Massie (1823-1910). Their granddaughter, Miss Marion D. Arbuckle of Waynesboro, Virginia, lent his portrait for reproduction by the Society for use with this article.

REV. WILLIAM T. RICHARDSON, D.D.

"Our good and true old Parson Richardson," as Mr. Fishburne describes him in the foregoing manuscript, was "the first beloved pastor" of Waynesboro's First Presbyterian Church. The

1946 Centennial history of the church likewise relates that he was a native of Charlotte County, Virginia, and subsequently "a student of Hampden-Sydney College under celebrated teachers and was in the graduating class of which Dr. Moses Hoge was a member. Following his graduation from Union Theological Seminary, a licentiate of West Hanover Presbytery, he entered upon a long and fruitful pastorate of twenty-three years, building a solid foundation for the young church at Waynesboro. At the time of his death he was the able editor of *The Central Presbyterian*, now *The Presbyterian Outlook*."

Pastor Richardson for many years conducted a classical school in Waynesboro, and many of the young soldiers who marched off to war from the town in 1861 had previously studied him.

He was born January 18, 1820, died August 14, 1895, and was brought back to Waynesboro for interment in the old cemetery adjacent to what is now the Centre for Shopping. Here in what had been the Presbyterian churchyard during the years of his pastorate sleeps the man described on his gravestone as "Pastor, Teacher, Editor—Faithful Unto Death."



FLOWING SPRING FARM

Twelfth of a Series

OLD HOMES OF AUGUSTA COUNTY

FLOWING SPRING FARM

The Home of Mr. and Mrs. Cecil C. Bowman

Gladys B. Clem

An autumn-tinted day of November 1909 was one of special import to Junius J. Bowman, known as "June" to his friends. It was the occasion he carried his young bride, the former Minnie Bell Clemmer, across the threshold of his newly restored home.

According to tradition, the original part of the dwelling, located on Route 695, had been constructed of brick made on the place sometime in the early 1800's. As in most homes of that period there is the usual plan of two rooms on either side of a central hall both on the main and second floors. A full basement extends beneath the building.

The farm was once a part of the Beverley Manor tract. Various owners in its two-hundred-year history were William Perry, Andrew Thompson, John Alexander, and Dr. James M. Watson. In 1892 Joseph H. Clemmer became the owner and in 1908 he sold the property to Junius J. Bowman. Mr. Bowman began its restoration in that year.

Five children blessed the Bowman marriage; one died in childhood. The present owners are Mr. and Mrs. Cecil C. Bowman, who reside there with their two sons. The passing generations have contributed changes that have resulted in the lovely and spacious farm home it is today.

Life for this busy family is centered in the attractive and livable family room. Dominating it is the handsome pine mantel, pegged together and obviously original. The carved detail is of sunburst design surrounded by reed panels outlined by cable moulding. Pine paneling from an old Augusta County school building complements the mantel and forms matching bookshelves on either side of the broad fireplace. The thickness of the walls is evident in the doorway leading into the dining room. Doors are low and broad and are of crusader design and, like the deep windows, have paneled jambs. Throughout the

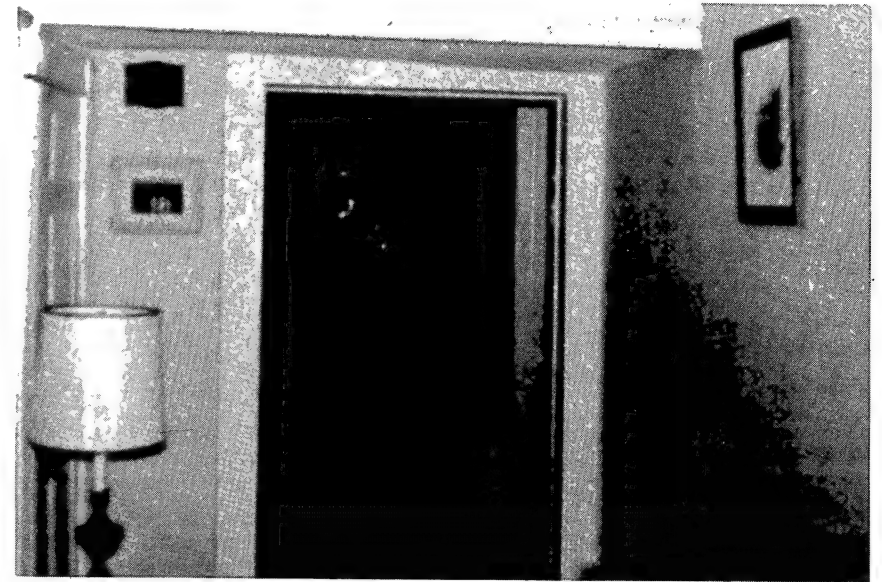


Mantel detail in family room, Flowing Spring Farm

house the pine flooring is of random width and has acquired a satin-like patina through the years.

A graceful stairway rises to the attic, the curving pine handrail made smooth by over a century of use. Delicate balusters and wide panels beneath the stair are indicative of the period of construction. Rafters in the attic are square-pegged together, with adz marks still showing and with each rafter numbered for proper placement (a forerunner of modern building techniques).

The back part of the dwelling was added in later years, although it also bears the imprint of an early date of construction. It consists of a bedroom, bath, dining room, and kitchen, with three bedrooms and a bath on the second floor. A unique feature of this part of the house is a refrigerator room used in the days before modern refrigeration. Water from an ice-cold and ever-flowing spring (from which the farm receives its name)



Lower hallway at Flowing Spring Farm

is forced to a reservoir on a nearby hill. From there the water is piped to a stone trough in a room off the kitchen, where once it cooled crocks of milk and cream in days when the family churn was kept busy and disposing of milk to a creamery was a negligible practice. The water from the pantry is then piped to the barn where it serves a second purpose.

Many of the home's furnishings are inherited antiques, fashioned by local cabinetmakers. Among them is a set of six chairs known as "woodpile chairs," so named for the fact that wood was selected from different varieties in the shop for the different parts of the chair. The wood in similar parts of each chair is exactly the same. Another keepsake prized by the family is a century-old branding iron used to mark barrels of the Bowman Distillery of Virginia.

Just inside the front door is a handsome old grandfather clock with an interesting history. It was at one time in the well-known Warren Green Hotel in Warrenton, Virginia, a picturesque hostelry on the site of a tavern of Civil War days. When the clock was restored, a bit of wood from an old horse-chestnut tree that once stood back of the Augusta County Courthouse was used in the restoration. Thus, two counties are linked in the venerable timepiece.

Seasons come and go, bringing their diverse changes to this lovely farm home tucked between Augusta's rolling hills. In summer the wide porches, extending out to the broad lawns and flanked by thick boxwoods, are shaded by century-old trees. But equally enjoyable are the winter days when the sun shines through the south windows, rivaling the flames in the hospitable fireplace. In fact, Flowing Spring Farm, it can be said, is a place for all seasons.

FRONTIER FORTS OF OLD AUGUSTA

Gregg S. Clemmer

Panic gripped the settlers of Augusta County in late July and August 1755. Early rumors of disaster in western Pennsylvania had been spread by stragglers from General Edward Braddock's expedition. The settlements were aflame with word of a horrible defeat, possibly a massacre, of the troops sent against Fort Duquesne. Now, returning soldiers were telling chilling tales of ambush, slaughter, and panic. Braddock was dead; two-thirds of his men were casualties; and those left were retreating to Philadelphia under the command of Colonel Dunbar to set up winter quarters—in midsummer! A small number of the Virginia companies had returned to Fort Loudoun in Winchester. Along the entire Virginia frontier there were but few and scattered men for defense against marauding Indians and their French allies.

In Augusta flocks of settlers began to abandon their homes for the safety of civilization. Reverend John Craig, one of their spiritual leaders, wrote:

When General Braddock was defeated and killed, our country was laid open to the enemy, our people were in dreadful confusion, and discouraged to the highest degree. Some of the richer sort that could take some money with them to live upon were for flying to a safer part of the country. My advice was then called for, which I gave, opposing that scheme as a scandal to our nation, falling below our brave ancestors, making ourselves a reproach among Virginians, a dishonor to our friends at home, an evidence of cowardice, want of faith and a noble Christian dependence on God, as able to save and deliver from the heathen; it would be a lasting blot to our posterity.¹

Still, many fled across the Blue Ridge, at times choking the narrow roads with their carts, wagons, and livestock. It seemed the entire Shenandoah Valley might be stampeding into a panic.

In Williamsburg Governor Robert Dinwiddie was alarmed at the tragic defeat of Braddock and concerned over the growing French and Indian menace. Although disappointed in young George Washington for his surrender at Fort Necessity the previous summer, the governor was impressed by his conspicuous conduct with Braddock. He now offered Washington command of the Virginia Regiment and all other troops to be employed in



Fort Necessity, as reconstructed.
Virginia State Library, Courtesy
National Park Service

the colony's service. After first refusing and then under further persuasion by Dinwiddie, Washington accepted in mid-August.

Following Braddock's defeat depredations by the Indians continued. In southwest Virginia, settlers found the bodies of three scouts near the Holston River; they had been tomahawked and scalped. There also one of the principal frontier leaders, Colonel James Patton, was surprised and killed at the end of July. Along the border, reports of raids and atrocities stirred the settlers. Cabins, isolated in lonely hollows, were attacked and burned; their inhabitants, killed or captured or often tortured.

In December 1755 Dinwiddie wrote to Washington at Fort Loudoun of his intention to send an expedition into what is now West Virginia to destroy Shawnee towns along the Ohio River. Washington balked at the idea, citing lack of men and supplies and the season. But the governor was determined. He sent Major Andrew Lewis with a force of several hundred, comprised of ranger companies and some friendly Cherokee Indians, across the Alleghenies after the Shawnee in mid-winter 1756.

That attempt, known as the Sandy Creek expedition, failed. In a letter to Washington the governor stated: "I believe they did not know the way to the Shawnese towns. I expect him [Major Lewis] in town to give an account of his march."² Lewis later reported to Dinwiddie that hunger was the main factor in the expedition's failure. Certainly the force had little food or ammunition and in mid-March experienced near mutiny over whether to press on or turn back. Desertion was a problem, and many who left were never heard from again. Lewis himself was not held personally responsible. As a result of this abortive attempt, frontier defense was seriously weakened at a time when it could ill afford setbacks.

While Major Lewis and his men had been freezing in the mountains, Governor Dinwiddie began to entertain other ideas for Virginia's protection. In a letter to the Lords of Trade, February 23, 1756, he recommended that forts be erected at the extremes "of the lands that I think are indisputably the right of the Crown of Britain."³ Such points were located on the Monongahela, at Niagara, and scattered around the Great Lakes, or so he thought. Later, a bit more informed of the geographical complications of such an undertaking, he presented a more practical plan to Colonel Washington. In the communication he wrote of the "string of forts" concept, a series of stockades spaced strategically along the Allegheny frontier.

In a later dispatch to Captain Peter Hog of the rangers, the governor gave detailed instructions for the design, erection, and location of the forts. At Dinwiddie's direction, a "Council of War" was held at Augusta Court House on July 27, 1756 to determine where the defenses should be built. According to Waddell,

The Council unanimously agreed that forts should be constructed at the following places: "At Peterson's, on the South Branch of Potowmack," . . . ; at Hugh Man's Mill, on Shelton's tract, . . . "; at the most important pass between the last named place and the house of Matthew Harper, on Bull Pasture"; at Matthew Harper's, . . . ; and at Captain John Miller's, on Jackson's river, 18 miles from Harper's.⁴

The council estimated the length of the frontier to be 250 miles and the number of men to garrison the proposed stockades, only 680. Because of the lack of supplies, manpower, and coordination, one or two forts only were completed on time. Most of the other stockades were built by local settlers and later taken over by the rangers.

Thus, in the summer of 1756, the Shenandoah Valley lay dangerously exposed to any attack the French and Indians could mount. The number of ranger stockades was small. Only Fort Dinwiddie, Dickinson's Fort, Fort Seybert, and Fort Upper Tract had been erected after Fort Loudoun in 1755. Nevertheless, the number of raids and deaths was growing, and anxious concern in Augusta was giving way to general panic.

With growing alarm settlers began fortifying their homes, digging underground rooms beneath their cabins, erecting rock blockhouses, and shoveling out underground passages to the nearest water supply.⁵ Probably the most novel idea was that of Thomas Feamster, an inhabitant of what is now Bath County. Near his secluded cabin he erected a thick-walled hut on stilts over a small lake. According to local tradition, people reported seeing the remains of the fort sticking up from the lake as late as the 1870's.⁶

Other settlers banded together and built community forts. Fort George and Hugh Mann's stockade in present Highland County; Miller's Fort and Fort Lewis in Bath; Audley Paul's stockade, Dunlap's Fort, and Fort William in Botetourt; and Young's Fort in Alleghany were examples of these. Later, when French influence began to weaken, all of these forts were garrisoned by rangers. This spread and strengthened the frontier

force and tended to discourage Indian attack in the immediate area.

Regardless of the small increase in defenses stemming from Dinwiddie's plan, fear was still strong in Augusta. In September 1756 the Shawnee attacked the settlement around Fort Dinwiddie, killing thirteen and taking twenty-eight prisoners. A week later Fort Dickinson was assailed, with several deaths and captures. Upon hearing the details of this attack, Governor Dinwiddie became disturbed at the absence of Colonel John Dickinson from the stockade. This marked the rather strained relationship between the governor and the militia of Augusta County.

Other forts were attacked as the threat grew. Fort Lewis and Miller's Fort in present Bath County and Fort Edwards in Frederick suffered casualties. Fort Vause in what is now Montgomery was taken and burned. Fort Seybert, now in West Virginia, was captured in 1758, with the massacre of many persons. The bloodshed became a reign of terror. By then, the frontier of the Shenandoah had been stripped of all who feared to stay; only the hardy, those who had something to protect, remained. As for the latter, the Indians could raid and terrorize, but the settlers were firmly established and would not give up what they had worked for.

Still the killing and burning continued. Near Mt. Jackson in 1758 Indians swept from the woods onto a small settlement. One can feel the helpless horror evidenced in the following account.

Late in the afternoon they were attacked. Mr. Painter, attempting to fly, had three balls shot through his body, and fell dead, when the others surrendered. The Indians dragged the dead body back to the house, threw it in, plundered the house of what they chose, and then set fire to it. While the house was in flames, consuming the body of Mr. Painter, they forced from the arms of their mothers, four infant children, hung them up in trees, shot them in savage sport, and left them hanging. They then set fire to a stable in which were enclosed a parcel of sheep and calves, thus cruelly and wantonly torturing to death the inoffensive dumb animals. After these atrocities they moved off with forty-eight prisoners; After six days travel they reached their villages, . . . determined to sacrifice their helpless prisoner, Jacob Fisher. They ordered him to collect a quantity of dry wood. The poor little fellow shuddered, burst into tears, and told his father they intended to burn him When he had collected a sufficient quantity of wood to answer their purpose, they cleared and smoothed a ring, around a sapling, to which they tied him by one hand, then formed a trail of wood around the tree and set it on fire. The poor

boy was then compelled to run around in this ring of fire until his rope wound him up in the sapling, and then back until he came in contact with the flame, whilst his infernal tormenters were drinking, singing and dancing around him with "horrid joy." This was continued for several hours, during which time the savage men became beastly drunk; and as they fell prostrate to the ground, the squaws would keep up the fire. With long sharp poles, prepared for the purpose, they would pierce the body of their victim whenever he flagged, until the poor and helpless boy fell and expired with the most excruciating torments, whilst his father and brothers were compelled to be witnesses.⁷

Reports of this nature only deepened the determination and boiled the tempers of Augusta's citizens. In a letter dated May 16, 1757, Governor Dinwiddie reported to the Lords of Trade that he "ordered them out with some of our forces to observe the motions of the enemy, protect our frontiers, and go scalping agreeable to French custom . . ."⁸ He referred to the Cherokees in this letter, but, no doubt, the whites engaged in that as well.

As the struggle between the French and English drew to a conclusion, hostilities in the Shenandoah began to fade. With the British conquest of Quebec, the French were beaten. Indians were, however, still an occasional threat. Raids, such as the Trimble raid near Churchville, continued until 1764. Only with the victory over the Indians at Point Pleasant in 1774 would these cease. Only then would peace return to Augusta.

More than two hundred years have passed since the last Indian raid in Augusta County. The lore of those early times, the tales of discovery, excitement, and tragedy have been passed down and treasured from generation to generation. But the mention of forts in Augusta tends to bring to mind the strife of the 1860's. The exploits of the brilliant Jackson and the ruthless Sheridan have considerably obscured earlier military ventures. Several persons have asked the writer whether the frontier forts in Augusta, Bath, and Highland were Yankee or Confederate. What can one say?

With little information available about the early forts, it may seem that a page of history has been lost. But a little diligence, patience, and exploration will reward those who are interested. The sites of the frontier forts of the 1750's, though often in rather mountainous country, can be located and in some cases actually traced on the ground. Other fort sites are still not

known, although in some cases the site has been narrowed down to a large field or several acres of land.

Augusta County in 1756 encompassed a vast area, which has been greatly reduced in the formation of other counties. The majority of fort sites, therefore, are in such counties as Highland, Bath, Botetourt, Alleghany, and others and in West Virginia. Near Staunton, of course, was the John Lewis house, the oldest section of which built partly of stone was intended for defense; and Augusta Stone Church, which survives, may have been constructed with that in mind as well.

Of the several forts known to have been built in Highland County, only one has been located as of the present time. The site of Fort George, as it is called locally, is on Clover Creek on the farm of the late H. S. McClung. This was the fort ordered to be erected at Matthew Harper's by the council of war held at Augusta Court House in 1756. Instead, the work was begun by local people and finished by the rangers. Started in either 1755 or 1756—probably in the former year as it was acquired in 1756—the fort was finished that fall. The garrison comprised from ten to fifty men, and a small community is said to have existed around the fort.

Examination of the site with the owner in 1968 revealed a series of depressions and elevations in an area of approximately one quarter of an acre. Mr. McClung noted that the site had never been plowed and exhibited an ancient lock and key reportedly from the powder magazine within the stockade. The site of Fort George can be reached from McDowell, Virginia, by taking Route 269 south about five or six miles to Clover Creek and inquiring for directions to the site.

In Bath County there is evidence of two forts and the supposed site of a third. Fort Dickinson, located four miles south of Millboro Springs on Route 42, was built in 1755 and greatly improved in 1756. It is known that the fort was attacked at least twice and that it was a widely used haven for local settlers in time of Indian threat. With an estimated provision for 250 defenders, it is doubtful that more than 50 ever garrisoned the fort at any one time.

Located on the Fort Dickinson farm, the site is well elevated and commands a beautiful view of the Cowpasture River. In 1972 several interesting features were still visible. Shallow trenches and depressions mark the site, together with some low

rock piles. A spring, now used for cattle, is located in the middle of the site.

Windy Cove Church, immediately west of Millboro Springs, was often used as a place of refuge also, though only four miles from Fort Dickinson. The original building is now gone, but familiar names of early settlers in the region appear on the gravestones in the cemetery.

Ten miles north on Route 269 is the supposed site of Fort Lewis. Although the site of the fort has never been precisely located, legend has it that this stockade was built on Fort Lewis Farm, a beautiful cattle farm along the Cowpasture River. The writer visited the farm in 1971, but, as it was near dusk, an accurate examination of the terrain was impossible.

Fort Lewis, not to be confused with the Fort Lewis which once stood near Staunton or a similarly named fort in Salem, Virginia, was built in 1756 and was at one time commanded by Charles Lewis, later to fall at the battle of Point Pleasant. The fort is said to have been attacked by Indians once and then was manned only by a handful of men, half of whom were sick. It has been described as a small, crude structure, hardly strong enough to withstand the slightest attack. However, in that one attempt by the Indians, they failed to capture the stockade and disappeared into the mountains.



Fort Dinwiddie site, Bath County. Log hut to left of house is approximate center of fort.
Photograph by Gregg S. Clemmer

Fort Dinwiddie is located five miles west of Warm Springs. Built in 1755 and strengthened in 1756, the fort was the main stronghold for the Augusta frontier throughout the period of Indian hostilities. George Washington inspected the fort in 1755 and had little good to say about what he found. Military discipline was very lax and the structure was only a very weak enclosure. But with improvements made the following year Fort Dinwiddie became a strong stockade at the edge of the wilderness.

The fort was attacked several times, each time the Indians retreating into the mountains before effective pursuit could follow. Today, with the site identified by the Virginia Archeological Society, visitors will see the remains of stone blockhouses uncovered during the Society's dig. There is also an old log hut on the site, but it is not presently known whether this was built at the same time as the fort or at a later date.

Many people are curious to know exactly what a fort or stockade of that period looked like. According to the most reliable descriptions they were crude log enclosures containing several log huts, a small stable, powder magazine, a storehouse for supplies, and possibly a spring. Instead of having walls with positions for firing, as is often popularized in frontier movies, a fort's defenders usually fired through chinks in the logs. Reports of underground tunnels and secret passages are often exaggerations, for there was little time to spend on such involved construction. The best example of the type of early frontier fortifications built in Augusta is reconstructed Fort Necessity near Farmington, Pennsylvania. It represents accurately, as the result of much research and excavation, the structure built by Colonel George Washington's troops in 1754 and surrendered by him to the French on July 4 of that year after a short fight.

The Virginia chain of forts along the frontier served as the outposts and defense line of the colony. Augusta County's role in this was considerable. Later, the frontier would move west and with it would go the anxious uncertainty of Indian raids and retaliation. At last the frontier forts would fall into disuse, then decay, and finally disappear into the wilderness, the lost symbols of a time long passed and almost forgotten.

NOTES

1. William Couper, *History of the Shenandoah Valley* (3 vols., New York, 1952), I, 480.
2. Robert Dinwiddie, *The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie*, ed. R. A. Brock (2 vols., Richmond, Va., 1883-1884), II, 338-339.
3. *Ibid.*, 434-435.
4. Joseph A. Waddell, *Annals of Augusta County, Virginia, from 1726 to 1871* (2nd. ed., Staunton, Va., 1902; reprinted, Bridgewater, Va., 1958), 136-137.
5. For more information on this unique underground defense, see H. M. Strickler, *Massanutten, Settled by the Pennsylvania Pilgrim* (Strasburg, Va., 1924).
6. For a description of the Feamster defense, see Oren Morton, *History of Bath County* (Bridgewater, Va., 1912), 51.
7. Samuel Kercheval, *A History of the Valley of Virginia* (4th ed., Strasburg, Va., 1925), 80-81.
8. Dinwiddie, *Records*, II, 623.

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A WEYER'S CAVE COLLECTION

William H. B. Thomas

Of the natural wonders of the Valley of Virginia, caves and caverns have always had a special fascination. So much so, indeed, that they have aroused lyrical admiration and as often somber wonderment.

In *Notes on the State of Virginia* published in 1787 Thomas Jefferson, a keen observer of natural phenomena, mentioned the many caverns in the limestone country and called Madison's Cave in Augusta County "the most noted." He described, among other details, how water had trickled down the side of the cave and encrusted the limestone "in the form of elegant drapery."¹ But the discovery and exploitation of another cavern soon eclipsed the renown of Madison's Cave.

According to one story of the new discovery Bernard Weyer, an Augusta County farmer and hunter, was out looking over his trap lines one day in 1806. A skunk, caught in a trap, tried to escape down a hole; Weyer, digging in after it, came on the entrance to a cave. Thus Weyer's Cave was discovered and acquired its name. It is presently known as Grand Caverns and is open to the public.

Soon after the find the owner of the property, alert to the possibilities of what he had, developed the cave into a tourist attraction. The entrance was enlarged and a hut built over it. Down in the cave crevasses were bridged and rough ground smoothed over. With enthusiasm and a fine fanciful imagination, names were bestowed on the various subterranean chambers. What some of these were in earlier times and what they are today will be seen in the collection of descriptions quoted below.

Weyer's Cave became widely known and increasingly popular in antebellum years. People of fashion, traveling to and from the Springs, stopped to explore and admire it. European visitors were duly impressed. One Englishman even considered it "well worth a voyage across the Atlantic."² Later, of course, other caverns were found and attracted attention, particularly Luray which was discovered in 1878.

Two years after the discovery of Weyer's Cave a visitor from New York on a summer trip through the Valley of Virginia

spent a day there. In *A Tour Through Part of Virginia, in the Summer of 1808* printed in 1810, John Edwards Caldwell (1769-1819), a respectable and devout gentleman, wrote the first detailed description of that natural wonder of Augusta County.

It is certainly the most remarkable subterranean curiosity on this Continent, or perhaps in the world, and is well worth the attention of an observing traveller. The entrance, and even after you proceed some paces, is by no means calculated to increase the ardour for research, but advancing further, and getting into the midst of a variety of cones and cylindrical pillars, gives fresh hopes and vigour for further discovery. In order to designate the different objects of this Cave, I shall give to each the name affixed to it by our conductor. The drawing room is the first large opening, after creeping and going through a number of narrow passages, in which we were frequently obliged to get forward on our hands and knees, to guard our heads from being broke by the crystalizations which hung over them, and to ascend and descend by artificial, and oftentimes crazy ladders. The dining room is the next large apartment, here are a great number of pillars and busts, which, on the first approach, appear to be indebted for their shape to the art of the chisel, and a variety of chairs, decorated like Bishop's stalls, give it the appearance of a cathedral; this room is 39 yards long; adjoining is a collection of tamboreens, or natural drums, formed by sheets or curtains of petrification, and sounding, when struck, like the martial instrument from which they are named. The ball room is 42 yards long, 15 wide, and about 30 feet high, the appearance of a music gallery at one end, adds to the deception which the mind encourages in this romantic grotto; here is a very curious pillar and also a number of columns, extending from top to bottom; near this is the resemblance of a grand chair of state, called the President's chair; a representation of a bank of ice, as white and transparent as the native original, and seemingly underneath, a beautiful cascade of falling water. Washington room is 90 yards long, and of an immense height; a bust stands nearly in the centre, and at a distance, so like the great man whose name it bears, that nature, though only showing her skill in its formation by drops of water, falling for ages, from the lofty ceiling above, could not be excelled by the most skilful statuary. An admirer of the virtues of this best of men, while gazing on his likeness in this spell-bound cavern, can only be prevented by respect for the second commandment, from falling down and worshipping. Lady Washington's room opens out of the last mentioned. The diamond room takes its name from the variety of chrystalizations and transparencies it exhibits; our lights were not sufficiently splendid, but had they done justice to the scene before us, I question if the eye could be presented with a more glittering or magnificent object. The enchanted room contains the image of "Lot's wife" in the very act of tripping away, and turning her head half around, when she was caught in the act, and paid the dear forfeit of her curiosity. She has now as much the appearance of a pillar of salt as of petrification. How happy for mankind, if the evils brought on families and on society, by their foibles, which Mrs. Lot undoubtedly

inherited from her mother Eve, were to be done away, by a few such examples of terrific justice! I denominated a very rough passage the wilderness of sin, and John Bunyan himself could not have painted a more terrific road into the garden of Eden, where the perspective presented a pleasing assemblage of trees, shrubs, variegated walks, and ornamental flowering plants. The *tout ensemble* appearing like a petrified flower garden, formed by nature in her playful moments, as if for her own amusement. In the bar room there is a spring of cool water, and as the conductor is generally provided with a bottle of brandy, the almost exhausted strength of the explorer may here be recruited. The mountain of salt, better described by the name it bears than any idea I can give of it, is not the least wonderful of the works of nature in this cavern. On the whole, it is highly worth the attention of the curious, the notice of the naturalist, and the observation of the philosophic traveller: . . .⁸

In 1845 Henry Howe, one of the first to compile historical and other information about the various states, published a volume about Virginia. Its title gives some idea of the contents: *Historical Collections of Virginia; Containing A Collection of the Most Interesting Facts, Traditions, Biographical Sketches, Anecdotes, &c. Relating to Its History and Antiquities, . . .* Together with another curiosity of nature in Augusta County, what he called the "Cyclopean towers," Howe included the following description of Weyer's Cave:

No language can convey an adequate idea of the vastness and sublimity of some, or the exquisite beauty and grandeur of other of its innumerable apartments, with their snow-white concretions of a thousand various forms. Many of these, with their striking and picturesque objects, have names exceedingly inappropriate, which to mention would degrade any description, however well written, by the association of the beautiful and sublime, with the vulgar and hackneyed. Washington Hall, the largest apartment, is 250 feet in length. A foreign traveller who visited the cave at an annual illumination, has, in a finely written description, the following notice of this hall:

"There is a fine sheet of rock-work running up the centre of this room, and giving it the aspect of two separate and noble galleries, till you look above, where you observe the partition rises only 20 feet towards the roof, and leaves the fine arch expanding over your head untouched. There is a beautiful concretion here, standing out in the room, which certainly has the form and drapery of a gigantic statue; it bears the name of the Nation's Hero, and the whole place is filled with those projections, appearances which excite the imagination by suggesting resemblances, and leaving them unfinished. The general effect, too, was perhaps, indescribable. The fine perspective of this room, four times the length of an ordinary church; the numerous tapers, when near you, so encumbered by deep shadows as to give

only a dim religious light; and when at a distance, appearing in their various attitudes like twinkling stars on a deep dark heaven; the amazing vaulted roof spread over you, with its carved and knotted surface; to which the streaming lights below in vain endeavored to convey their radiance; together with the impression that you had made so deep an entrance, and were so entirely cut off from the living world and ordinary things; produces an effect which, perhaps, the mind can receive but once, and will retain forever."

"Weyer's Cave," says the writer above quoted, "is in my judgment one of the great natural wonders of this new world; and for its eminence in its own class, deserves to be ranked with the Natural Bridge and Niagara, while it is far less known than either. Its dimensions, by the most direct course, are more than 1,600 feet; and by the more winding paths, twice that length; and its objects are remarkable for their variety, formation, and beauty. In both respects, it will, I think, compare, without injury to itself, with the celebrated Grotto of Antiparos. For myself, I acknowledge the spectacle to have been most interesting; but, to be so, it must be illuminated, as on this occasion. I had thought that this circumstance might give to the whole a toyish effect; but the influence of 2,000 or 3,000 lights on these immense caverns is only such as to reveal the objects, without disturbing the solemn and sublime obscurity which sleeps on every thing. Scarcely any scenes can awaken so many passions at once, and so deeply. Curiosity, apprehension, terror, surprise, admiration, and delight, by turns and together, arrest and possess you. I have had before, from other objects, one simple impression made with greater power; but I never had so many impressions made, and with so much power, before. If the interesting and the awful are the elements of the sublime, here sublimity reigns, as in her own domain, in darkness, silence, and deeps profound."⁴

A particularly enlivening description of Weyer's Cave was provided by Porte Crayon, the pseudonym of David Hunter Strother (1816-1888). Strother, a native of Berkeley County, Virginia (now West Virginia), was a popular travel writer of his time who embellished his work with his own illustrations. As one of the highest-paid contributors to *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, he furnished it in 1854 with material on the Valley of Virginia. Three years later this was included in *Virginia Illustrated: Containing A Visit to the Virginia Canaan, and the Adventures of Porte Crayon and His Cousins*. As the title suggests, Strother depicted a visit to Weyer's Cave with three young female cousins, Dora, Minnie, and Fanny.

"With what sensations of mysterious awe, with what sinkings of heart, with what wild gushing fancies their young heads teemed as they crossed the threshold of that dark doorway"—so

the girls entered the cave, according to Strother's gently satirical and humorous account. First they came to the Hall of Statuary, then to The Cataract, where in the glow of their candles cupped in tin shades

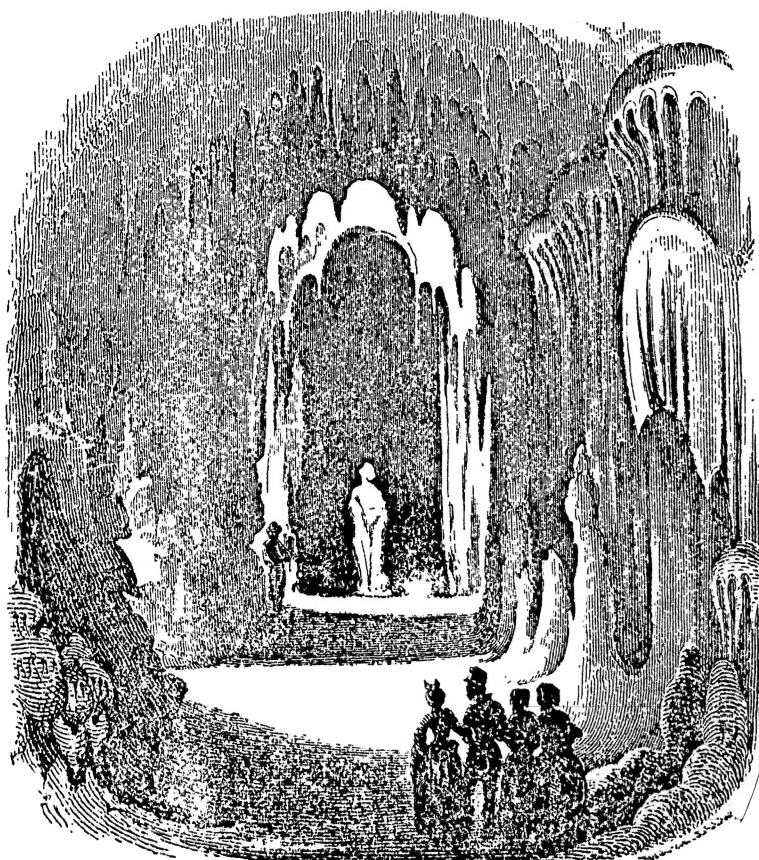
a stream seemed to leap from a great height, pouring its white waters in sheets of foam over a broken ledge of rock, and tumbling down to the feet of the amazed spectators. They held their breath as if listening to catch the roar of the water-fall, but not a murmur broke the death-like silence.⁵

Next came Solomon's Temple, where there was, Fanny exclaimed, "a great shoulder of mutton hanging on the wall!"⁶ That part of the temple, their guide explained, was known as Solomon's Meat House. From there the party came to the Cathedral, in the center of which hung "a mass of spar which bears a fancied resemblance to a chandelier, while beyond it rises the pulpit, an elevated circular desk covered with the most graceful folds of white drapery." Porte Crayon's vivid imagination caught other fanciful likenesses:

On the opposite side is a baldachin [a canopy over an altar], enriched with glittering pendent crystals, and the whole is hung with stalactites, dropping in long points and broad wavy sheets, some of a pure white, others of a clay red, bordered with bands of white, or with darker stripes of red and brown. These stone draperies are translucent and sonorous, emitting soft musical tones on being struck; and the heavier sheets which tapestry the sidewalls respond to the blows of the hand or foot with notes like deep-toned bells.⁷

So, "with interest and confidence increasing at every step, our adventurers went on; not caring who was before or who behind, they climbed up and down ladders, crept through narrow passages, and looked fearlessly down into the awful pits that yawned beside the way . . ."⁸ They came to the Ballroom, 100 by 40 feet, where dances were formerly held in August and September when the cave was illuminated and crowds of people were present. But the annual illuminations had been discontinued by the proprietor because the smoke "sullied the purity of the sparry incrustations, and visitors not infrequently, taking advantage of the license which prevailed, would break and carry off whatever of the curious and beautiful they found within their reach."⁹

After they had passed through the Senate Chamber and down Jacob's Ladder, the guide suddenly signaled: "I hear an



The Gnome King's Palace
From Porte Crayon, *Virginia Illustrated*: . . .

unusual noise There must be some one in the cave besides ourselves. Listen!"¹⁰ They heard what sounded like half-stifled grunts and groans, a sputtering and scratching like a cat.

"'Oh mercy!' twittered Dora; 'perhaps a bear!'"

At this awful suggestion the girls huddled together like a covey of partridges."¹¹ But no, it was their gigantic Negro driver, Little Mice, "all ashen with terror and red with mud."¹²

Having conquered this threat, Porte Crayon and his cousins proceeded on. They reached the Great Hall, which he described:

Pillared walls, hung with long, sweeping folds of tapestry; banners flaunting overhanging galleries; canopied niches filled with shadowy

sculpture; the groined and vaulted ceiling dimly appearing at a majestic height, and long pendants dropping from out of the thick darkness that the feeble torches cannot penetrate. Then the white, startling giant, which imposes so completely on the senses that it is difficult to conceive it was not sculptured by the hand of man, and pedestaled where it stands, precisely in the centre of the Hall. Then the weird towers that rise beyond on either side, so draped and fluted, whose tops are lost in the upper gloom. This must be the Palace of the King of the Gnomes, and the gigantic figure there is his seneschal.¹³

So what in Porte Crayon's flight of fancy was the seneschal of the King of the Gnomes was, in earlier times, Washington, the Nation's Hero.

Passing the Enchanted Moors and the oyster shells, they came to the Bridal Chamber and to the Music Room, the latter of which was

nearly filled with broad sheets of incrustation falling from the ceiling to the floor, between which one might walk as through the mazes of a labyrinth. These sheets, like others which they had seen, were translucent and highly sonorous. When lights were placed behind them they glowed like candent metal, and at every blow gave out deep, rolling notes, which filled the cave like the peal of a church organ. On singing with this accompaniment, the effect was singularly pleasing, the voice being broken into tremulous quavers by the overpowering vibrations.¹⁴

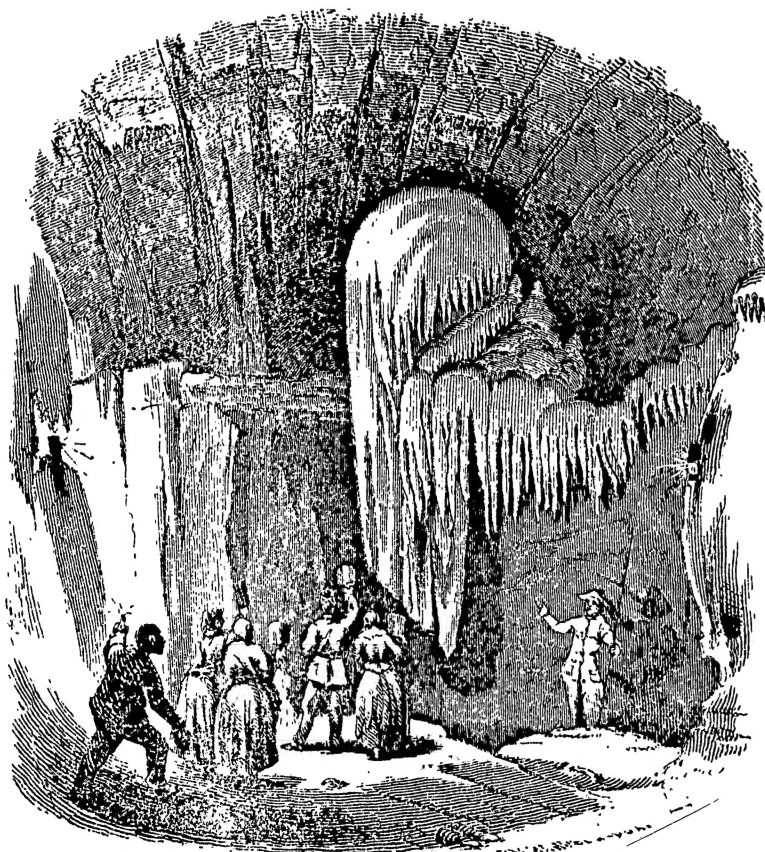
Finally, four hours later so Porte Crayon wrote, they emerged from the cave and, reminded that it was dinner time, "cheerily retrod the path to the hotel."¹⁵

A more recent description of Weyer's Cave, under its present name of Grand Caverns, appears in William M. McGill's *Caverns of Virginia* published in 1933 by the Virginia Commission on Conservation and Development. The book deals with the origin and characteristics of caverns in the Valley of Virginia and describes in considerable detail a number of so-called developed caverns. One of these is Weyer's Cave, the present Grand Caverns.

According to this account, the portion of the caverns open to the public includes a series of long and narrow corridors and a number of spacious rooms connected by short passages. Side channels and other passages lead off at points along the tour. From the entrance to the far end of the caverns the length of the main corridor is about 1,700 feet, although the complete tour of developed passages, alcoves, and rooms is nearly 3,800 feet.

The far end of the caverns is said to be some 200 feet below the top of the hill in which the caverns are located.¹⁶

Over the years, interestingly enough, some of the old names of parts of the caverns have been retained, while others have been added. There are still the Ballroom, Senate Gallery (rather than Chamber), Jacob's Ladder, Cathedral Hall, and Bridal Chamber. There is a Crystal Cascade, which may be the present-day name of the Cataract, and the oyster shells are still pointed out. But there are a number of names of more recent origin, some of which reflect a modern twist of imagination: Roxy's Cathedral, Wonderland, Persian Palace, Lindbergh Bridge, the Peanut Gallery, and Sunset Park, along with more traditional



The Bridal Chamber
From Porte Crayon, *Virginia Illustrated*: . . .

concepts such as the Natural Bridge, Jefferson's Hall, Jackson's Hall, and others.

In the Bridal Chamber is the Bridal Veil. Porte Crayon's sketch of this, reproduced herein, bears a remarkably good likeness to present-day photographs. Of it Crayon wrote: "It resembles a sheet of white drapery thrown over a gigantic round buckler, and falling in classic folds nearly to the ground. Some ingenious person has fancied that it looked like a bride's veil hanging over a monstrous Spanish comb, and hence the name of the room."¹⁷ In *Caverns of Virginia* it is described in this fashion:

Several attractive scarf-draped or blanket-draped shields project from the side walls, of which the beautiful Bridal Veil is a magnificent example. It is a giant shield, some 10 to 12 feet in diameter, hanging disc-like from the side wall about 35 feet above the floor. A thin sparkling white veil-like sheet of drapery hangs from the shield to within a few feet of the floor."

And later it is depicted as "the resplendent Bridal Veil, a drapery-shrouded shield of matchless beauty . . ."¹⁸

One last note: what Caldwell saw as a bust of Washington; Howe's foreign traveler, a gigantic statue of the Nation's Hero; and Porte Crayon, seneschal of the King of the Gnomes, was, in *Caverns of Virginia*, only a "Giant stalagmite."¹⁹

Thus, from its discovery until the present day, Weyer's Cave has excited the imagination and aroused the admiration of all who have seen it and written about it.

NOTES

1. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. William Peden (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1955), 21, 22.
2. William H. Gaines, Jr., "Going Underground in Virginia: Caverns of the Shenandoah Valley," *Virginia Cavalcade*, III, no. 4, p. 27.
3. John Edwards Caldwell, *A Tour Through Part of Virginia, in the Summer of 1808*, ed. William M. E. Rachal (Richmond, Va., 1951), 33-35. The passage quoted is reproduced with the kind permission of the editor, William M. E. Rachal.
4. Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Virginia; Containing A Collection of the Most Interesting Facts, Traditions, Biographical Sketches, Anecdotes, &c. Relating to Its History and Antiquities . . .* (Charleston, S. C., 1845; reprinted, Baltimore, 1969), 184.
5. Porte Crayon [David Hunter Strother], *Virginia Illustrated: Containing A Visit to the Virginia Canaan, and the Adventures of Porte Crayon and His Cousins* (New York, 1857), 84-85.

6. *Ibid.*, 86.
7. *Ibid.*, 87-88.
8. *Ibid.*, 88.
- 9-11. *Ibid.*, 89.
12. *Ibid.*, 90.
13. *Ibid.*, 91-92.
14. *Ibid.*, 96.
15. *Ibid.*, 98.
16. William M. McGill, *Caverns of Virginia* (University, Virginia, 1933), 56-57.
17. Crayon, *Virginia Illustrated*, 95.
18. McGill, *Caverns*, 60, 66.
19. *Ibid.*, 58-59.

A PROGRESS REPORT ON OUR BICENTENNIAL PROJECT

More than a year ago our Society embarked upon what we believe will be a most significant contribution to the Bicentennial Celebration of our nation's independence. The Board of Directors initiated a project which the Society in its annual meeting last May endorsed and for which it appropriated two thousand dollars of its funds to be borrowed when necessary.

This project is the preparation and writing of a book which will tell the thrilling story of the part played by the hardy and devoted patriots of the Great Valley of Virginia in the nurturing of the desire for liberty, and in the actual successful struggle for its attainment to the American Revolution.

In these past thirteen months the work has gone steadily forward toward this accomplishment. Our researchers and writers, headed by Dr. Howard McK. Wilson and Mr. William H. B. Thomas, have carried on with enthusiasm and a part of the manuscript has been completed. Our researchers have received the hearty cooperation of other historical societies in the Valley, individual historians, college libraries, genealogists, and many other interested persons to such an extent that an amazing amount of original source material, much of it hitherto untapped, has been made available. In a sense we are embarrassed by the wealth of this material at our disposal if we can but have the time, strength and funds to obtain it. Much of it requires visits to county courthouses in the Valley and elsewhere which in turn takes much travel, cost and effort. We believe that when the book is printed it will be not only the one single piece of Bicentennial literature relating to Virginia west of the Blue Ridge but will be a valued addition to the whole story of our country's gallant struggle for freedom, and a work which will find a ready welcome by all across our land who have their antecedents in the Great Valley.

The project has grown in magnitude with the opening of so many new fields of research at first unknown. Naturally, therefore, the cost of the financial backing needed has also grown. The general increase in the rising costs of paper have also indicated a new increase in the cost of the book is printed. Your Project Committee is now seeking help for our enterprise from various agencies and individuals who will still continue to do so.

We are still hoping that the members of the Society will do their best to make this a team project. Our research-writer team, and those who are helping them in various areas of our Valley, are really serving sacrificially in time and expense. What better use of our personal talents and resources could we have at this particular time in history than to contribute toward the commemoration and reproduction of the spirit of our forefathers who were so "nobly contending for liberty" two hundred years ago?

James Sprunt
Chairman, The Project Committee

IN MEMORIAM

MR. WILLIAM FRAZIER
MRS. AUGUSTA C. PATTERSON
MISS FANNIE BARTH STRAUSS
MR. ROY D. RIDGEWAY